

# Hunters, Gatherers and Foragers in a Metropolis: Commonising the Private and Public in Mumbai

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Mumbai is in reality a city of places that are not a part of the current set of fantasies that rule the minds of urban planners but are yet integrally linked to capitalist processes, to urban practices of place-making and to urbanism itself. From this perspective, this enquiry seeks not only to better understand and explain the processes that are forcing out the city's less privileged from its commons, but also imagine how a more inclusive future could be achieved.

The popular imagination of Mumbai/Bombay/Bambai<sup>1</sup> is as much about its built environment as about its people, what they do, their collective and individual habits, and their aspirations. Mumbai's high-rises and malls, its slums and shanties, its pavement dwellers and SoBo<sup>2</sup> elites and its "mysterious middle classes"<sup>3</sup> have been celebrated and derided in movies, in literature and the media, and in everyday conversations. The morphology of the city, its spatial practices, and its urbanism are regarded as unique, so much so that a sociologist once said that it is perhaps "India's only city".

Paralleling this picture in the popular imagination is an academic or scholarly one that seems to be fascinated by Mumbai's industrial culture (fast vanishing) and landscape, its business and social elite and its underclass, an imagination that is almost enchanted by Bollywood and the city's criminal classes, and by its consumer culture and its resilience to disasters. The city's experiments with governance, increasingly influenced by new avatars of "civil society" organisations,<sup>4</sup> its cosmopolitanism, its famed cheek-by-jowl poverty and riches, its legendary charitable disposition to those who are willing to struggle and make it big have been grist for the academic mill, whether the workers in this mill are of a Marxist or liberal orientation, postmodernist or simply of an empiricist disposition.

It is rare that these imaginations gaze outward to the sea that is a constant presence, and that more often than not in recent times has been perceived as a threat in more senses than one, and recognise the tens of thousands whose precarious livelihoods are dependent on fishing. The thousands of *tabelas* (cattle sheds) that dot the city's suburbs and have intricate links with the formal and informal sectors of the economy make news only when real estate sharks eye their sites for their commercial value, or when "conscientious" citizens suddenly wake up to the hygiene problems they supposedly cause. Likewise with the salt pan lands and salt workers, with the state as well as builders coveting these "properties" for their new projects and bringing more land into the domain of monopoly rent in a land-scarce and land-hungry city. In Mumbai's many private and government forests, its mangroves and the wild growths on vast tracts of land owned by many public sector and government establishments, thousands of the city's pre-precariat struggle to eke out meagre incomes through foraging, hunting and gathering for food, fodder and fuelwood.

The seeming incongruity of the presence of a large number of hunters, gatherers and foragers in a metropolitan city with aspirations of becoming a "global city" through large-scale urban

This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the 13th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons in January 2011 at Hyderabad. The research was carried out as part of a Visiting Research Fellowship at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, in 2008-09. Part of the field research was also done during a survey for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority for the rehabilitation of flood victims in 2006-07. The comments of an anonymous reviewer are gratefully acknowledged.

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restructuring, infrastructure upgradation, and financialisation of the economy provided the initial thrust for this study. It is entirely comprehensible that “visions” of the city projected by its corporate firms find no place for these groups in their plans.<sup>5</sup> But does the “distribution of the sensible” (Ranciere 2004) into visible and invisible that is so characteristic of the dominant classes and the state also affect the lens through which researchers see the city? One can only speculate (the basis for across-class survival strategies and “futures” planning in Mumbai) on the reasons for the invisibility of these groups in all but the most sensitive of action research and public sociology studies. In addition, they are conspicuously absent in the diverse environmental plans that seek to address the insecurities that arise out of human-induced natural disasters, as observed during the 2005 floods in the city.<sup>6</sup> Again, with the exception of the rare socially engaged activist-scholar’s attention, fish workers, foragers for fuelwood and fodder, salt pan workers, and workers in small-scale dairying play no part in suggested disaster mitigation strategies and disaster management plans despite very clear evidence of the role forests, mangroves and salt pan lands have in flood prevention.

### Urban Studies: Filling the Silences

There are important methodological and theoretical or conceptual issues related to the practice of urban studies that emerge in these silences and invisibilities. In his studies on south-east Asia, McGee draws attention to the proto-proletariat and the “ingenious paradox” of “peasants in the city” whose survival strategies are characterised by “flexibility and fluidity between putative formal and informal sectors” (Kelly 2007: 258). Ananya Roy’s (2005: 148) work on informality similarly points to a “series of transactions that connect different economies and spaces to one another”, something that ought to have alerted us to activities, spaces, places and practices beyond what is commonly categorised as urban, and has hence been ignored and made invisible. Perhaps deeply entrenched conceptual frameworks of urban-rural differences – even in rural-urban continuum approaches – explain the narrow focus of urban studies in non-western contexts. Myopic interpretations of Marxist perspectives on the city that fail to see beyond rigidly outlined capital flows and capital accumulation processes, and ideas of class and class struggle that are restricted to the formal or organised sector offer another plausible explanation for this. Increasingly popular post-modern approaches whose evidence essentially consists of representations and visualisations, and hence reproduce the “distribution of the sensible”, could be yet another reason for the invisible remaining out of the purview of serious scholarship. The difficulties of carrying out ethnographic work of an entire city,<sup>7</sup> with or without de Certeau’s “walking in the city” methodology, offers still yet another conceivable explanation.

Research on the urban commons in India is scarce, though there are signs of increasing interest. The focus, however, is on issues that reflect the core concerns of urban sociology and critical urban studies; streets, maidans, lakes, parks, and garbage disposal sites are usually identified as the commons. The identification of the commons by researchers does recognise issues of

class, gender, inequality and the concerns of the urban poor, but on the whole seems to be more of a reaction to exclusionary tendencies and the takeover of common facilities and sites by the middle classes and the elite. Questions are rarely raised beyond the routine ones of struggles over access and exclusion with reference to common civic natural resources such as lakes and parks, common facilities (playgrounds), or the use of streets and footpaths for vending, hawking, housing, and so on. How and from where do the urban poor meet their fuelwood needs? What are the sources of food and fodder for urban livestock holders? How do the urban poor and lower middle classes meet their food requirements? What kind of resource dependencies are exhibited in the livelihood strategies of street vendors and hawkers, and of sundry artisanal groups working in the city? Are urban and peri-urban natural resource pools and commons (for instance, fish from lakes, rivulets, creeks, ponds and other water bodies) integrated into the supply chains of small retailers, wholesalers and supermarkets, as well as of eateries and restaurants? It is these kinds of commons – ecological commons – used for livelihood dependencies, but also feeding into domestic and transnational commodity chains, that are of interest to this study.

Research on common pool resources (CPRS), or more simply the commons, has mostly tended to deal with two intersecting themes – property rights and regimes, and governance issues. That CPRs enable the poor and those with no property exercise their right to labour is usually assumed rather than problematised; a labour perspective on the commons is usually not directly a subject matter of research. Quite apart from the difficulties of valuing “community” labour, the relative neglect of a labour perspective derives largely from a neoclassical economics approach to “valuing” labour. It is not surprising that even radical scholars fail to observe hunting, gathering and foraging kinds of labour in the metropolitan city of Mumbai. These are after all outmoded and primitive forms of labour that have no place either in a global city or a megacity. They do not fit within a “phantasmagoria of city-ness” (Robinson 2004: 570) derived from western urban theory. Seemingly slow, inefficient, seasonal, non-commodified, low technology and labour intensive, and unconnected to capitalist markets, these are external to the world of “fantasies about cities” that urban theorists and policymakers have built for themselves. They have nothing to do with “wonder, speed, diversity, density, verticality, innovation” (ibid).

One of the objectives of this study is to describe Mumbai as a city by describing places that are not a part of this set of fantasies, but are yet integrally linked to capitalist processes, to urban practices of place-making, and to urbanism itself. By doing so, it seeks to contribute in a small way to the goals Robinson sets for urban studies – to expand “the resources available for understanding and explaining urban processes and urban societies” and to generate “resources for imagining city futures and better ways of living in cities” (2004: 570). In taking on this burden, it is hoped that this study will even if in a tiny way contribute to the Lefebvrian project of developing “a comprehensive theory of the production of space” (Kipfer et al 2008: 8). It is expected that attention to the commons will lead to a greater focus on everyday life in a more central way, as “a semi-autonomous and contradictory level of totality” (ibid).

Such an approach will help develop a more robust critique of bourgeois environmentalism that fetishises nature and assists processes of accumulation by dispossession. It is perhaps as a reaction to this fetishisation of nature that radical urbanists fail to perceive the huge amount of labour expended by the landless proletariat in the urban resource commons, preferring to invest their scholarship on the political economy of capital accumulation defined in narrow terms. Lefebvre mentions that even Karl Marx failed to “discover rhythms” despite his explicit focus “on the transformation of brute nature through human work, through technology and inventions, through labour and consciousness” (2004: 7).

Private and government forestlands, mangroves, coastal zones, small and large water bodies, including the Arabian Sea, salt pans, and unused institutional lands with vegetative cover – all these constitute objects of interest. In theory much of these are not the commons. The sea and coastal zones, lakes and other water bodies, and forests and mangroves may have had the character of commons at a time but with the advent of the Portuguese and later the British, and postcolonial legal enactments, they have officially become either government (revenue) land or are privately owned. There is also a class of resource endowments that owe their presence and health to their enclosure and care by private firms (for example, Godrej mangroves) or by the government and public sector establishments (airports, universities, ports and dockyards, oil refineries and depots, defence and railway establishments). All of these are now commonised, converted into CPRs by the urban poor and also by a range of contractors who thrive on sand mining, grass cutting, water supply, and such activities. Except for the Koli fishing community, the conversion of public and private property into the commons does not happen at a community level, as is generally the case with rural commons. As we shall see, there are issues of gender, migration, ethnicity and class embedded in the actions and the labour invested in commonising resource-rich sites.

At the level of action, private and state-owned properties are converted into resource commons. With the exception of coastal fishing, however, it is not clear whether those involved in commonising actually think of these sites as commons. Users of these resources tend to differentiate between rights over property and rights over embedded resources in a property available for access to external actors who own no property (the second being regarded as the commons). “Commonising” or “commoning” is perhaps a better description of the processes and actions described here rather than the term “commons”. There is no public notion of the commons, but the idea is seen in more immanent terms. The idea of accessing resources that are not commodities and are not strictly classified as property is different from the concept of poaching. In many ways, especially in a sociological and also political sense, Mumbai<sup>8</sup> itself constitutes a commons for the people of the south Asian subcontinent. Ironically, it is so in a way that refutes Hardin’s tragedy of the commons argument. Millions of individuals acting alone or as part of groups use Mumbai as an open access resource to enhance their self-interest, but the city does not itself get depleted or degraded despite the absence or failure of institutional arrangements for regulation. It

is perhaps a feature of every capitalist city that it exists as a city because there are people who use it, exploit it, and in the process make it what it is. The difference with Mumbai is that it is closer, temporally and spatially, to the process of primitive accumulation, which is as yet an ongoing process in India.

### Resource Dependencies and Commonising

In classical Marxist theory, colonial plunder is an important moment facilitating primitive accumulation. Mumbai was a key colonial outpost aiding this process. From the early 20th century onwards the city became implicated in primitive accumulation for domestic capital. A notable difference in this process, however, was that more than three centuries of colonial rule and half a century of managerial and entrepreneurial forms of urban governance could not entirely displace subsistence peasant economies from operating in the city and its region.<sup>9</sup> Artisanal fishing continued on a large scale and adivasi groups persisted with forest dependencies in small pockets, especially in areas around the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Aarey Milk Colony (a government dairy). Significantly, for Indian cities, expropriated agricultural households did not go on to constitute the urban proletariat for historical reasons to do with the nature of Indian capitalism itself. Peasants coming into Mumbai only partially contributed to the industrial labour force with the majority finding their way into the informal sectors of the economy, or choosing to hunt, forage and gather by commonising resource enclaves enclosed by public (state) and private agencies. However, it would not be accurate to describe the latter workforce (with close ethnic and trade relations to the former) as constituting a peasantry in the city subsisting on natural resource-based livelihoods. They constitute the lowest link in a long commodity chain that goes up to large-scale national and multinational supermarkets and the burgeoning service economy, as well as a large number of retail outlets that service the lower middle class and the urban poor. Their numbers are sufficiently large to ensure that no description of economic and urban transformation in Mumbai would be complete without assessing their role in it.

The Fisheries Census of 2005 (CMFRI 2006)<sup>10</sup> put the number of fish workers in Greater Mumbai at around 50,000, but activists working with fish workers estimated it to be close to or more than 1,00,000 in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region as a whole. The number further goes up if one includes others dependent on fishing-related activities, especially in the allied and post-harvest sectors. A key problem in enumeration, which is also a source of conflict among fish workers, is the movement of fish workers around the region, leading to encroachment on catchment areas.<sup>11</sup> A number of Koli fishing villages or *Koliwadās* (27 in Greater Mumbai) continue to survive in the city and its western suburbs.<sup>12</sup> Fishing for a livelihood is not confined to the sea; it extends to the many lakes (Powai, Tulsi, Vihar), ponds, rivers (Mithi, Dahisar), rivulets, streams and creeks<sup>13</sup> in the city. The last is also used by migrants from within and outside the state who fish for food during times of scarcity, or to earn a temporary or seasonal income.<sup>14</sup> Migrants, however, face several barriers to fishing in the lakes – having to bribe municipal officials and guards at access points; lack of familiarity with currents and depths; and having to stay away

from wild fauna (crocodiles, leopards). Traditional fisher people have a better awareness of how to negotiate these problems. In recent years, fish workers have had to compete with better-off Konkan migrants seeking fresh water fish and crustaceans during the monsoon in streams flowing into the lakes or the sea, and with recreational anglers who detest artisanal fishers and accuse them of causing environmental degradation through over-fishing.

The incomes earned are meagre, but for fish workers, fishing is not just a source of food or a source of supply for the urban poor. They have supply contracts with supermarket chains, restaurants and wholesalers whose super profits are based on fish workers' self-exploitation. The fisher people of Mumbai also supply to global markets, especially prawns, for which there is a huge global demand.<sup>15</sup> If studying the global calls "for a focus on locally scaled practices and conditions articulated with global dynamics", as Sassen (2007: 7) states, commodity chains must be assessed not just in global cities, but also in "ordinary cities"<sup>16</sup> such as Mumbai even if the city has largely been studied under the rubric of a megacity. The commons for fish workers constitute not just the sea and water bodies but also several areas along the coast used as landing grounds, for weaving, repairing and drying nets, cleaning fish and as markets.

Pressures from the real estate lobby and developmental impulses – public housing, recreation spaces and infrastructure projects (ports, bridges, roads, highways) – have encroached on these commons and/or erected barriers to accessing jetties where boats are moored and from where they take off on fishing expeditions. The Koliwad, as Warhaft notes, "happen to occupy some of the most expensive real estate in the world pursuing an occupation many consider defiling" (2001: 215). Fishers in Bandra and Worli have reported that new housing estates protest against the presence of Koliwad in their neighbourhood, complaining about the smell they generate. Such complaints are reported to have been especially made by Gujarati Hindus and Jains, significant business communities and important players in the real estate sector in Mumbai. There is a long history of protest and struggle by the fishing community against large projects, mostly along the west coast and the southern tip of the city where fishing villages are located. From Esselworld and Water Kingdom of the 1980s to the Bandra-Worli Sealink,<sup>17</sup> urban development has affected them more than any other group or class in Mumbai. There are frequent struggles over open land traditionally used for fishing activities, but now informally or formally "converted" to be used for parking, recreation or community activities. An ongoing struggle is centred on an open parcel of land in Mumbai's southern tip, with the Cuffe Parade Residents' Association protesting against encroachment by fisherfolk and the "stink" caused by them using the area for drying fish.

The increasing privatisation of beaches along the west coast (in areas such as Juhu, Manor, Madh and Gorai) by the development of resorts has further cut into the number of access points for fishing and allied activities. Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules have also been used to deny access to these common lands. The 2011 amendments to the CRZ rules,<sup>18</sup> ostensibly to create space for slum rehabilitation, have ignored several issues raised

by fish workers in the city. Bourgeois environmentalism<sup>19</sup> and middle-class ideas of aesthetics and pollution have further ensured the shift of fishing activities to inconvenient locations. Fish markets, small-scale ice factories, and boat and net repair enterprises have been forced to move out of the city, out of common lands that have subsequently either been privatised or made into limited access public areas. Public purpose arguments (for instance, water supply) have been deployed to bar fishing activities in lakes and ponds around the city. Ironically, recreational fishing is permitted but artisanal fishing for livelihoods is banned in lakes such as Powai. Recreational fishing enthusiasts refer to artisanal fishers as poachers and their activities as "illegal fishing." The continued presence of tens of thousands of Koli<sup>20</sup> and other non-traditional fish workers reveals the exclusionary nature of economic growth and the narrowness of the opportunity structure, which is, however, showing signs of gradually opening up. There are complex historical and cultural issues that prevent Kolis from accessing these opportunities and entering non-traditional sectors. These maybe also serve to explain why the Kolis are the only resource-dependent group that does not share Mumbai's speculative real estate aspirations. Perhaps it is the nature of fishing itself as an economic and social activity, but also as a kind of labour practice that validates the commons as an essential and natural principle of economic activity and rejects property principles.

### Other Resource Commons

A second set of resource commons in Mumbai is salt pan land, mostly on the east coast but also along some of the creeks that crisscross or work their way inwards in the northern suburbs. Estimated at 5,500 acres,<sup>21</sup> a little over half is "encroached" revenue land used for salt panning by household units, mainly from the Agari community of traditional salt workers in Maharashtra and Gujarat. The rest is leased out to various salt works owned by some of Mumbai's old business families, mainly Gujarati and Parsi. Some of these families are now into real estate development and construction, and along with other builders, they have been trying to get the Union Ministry of Commerce, which owns the land, to transfer it to the state government for "development". There has been continuous pressure to "release" salt pan land for construction and commercial development over the last decade. Slums have sprouted in sections of the salt pan land along the east coast. Citing slum rehabilitation and public housing,<sup>22</sup> the need to increase market supply to reduce housing costs, and infrastructure development as reasons, both the central and state governments have agreed to initiate land transfers and end salt panning in Mumbai. The city's municipal corporation, the state's housing development agency and various ministerial committees have over the last decade drawn up plans to free up salt pan land for development, even suggesting an increase in the floor space index (FSI) in violation of CRZ restrictions.

While environmental organisations and activists have opposed these plans, small-scale salt pan workers and owners are divided, with many supporting the plans in the hope of making a killing in the real estate market. A section of salt pan workers accuse Agari political leaders of delaying the transfer citing environmental



concerns so that they get the time to acquire land and benefit from increased prices when these commons become state government land and are then handed over to private builders.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, environmental arguments about the flood mitigation capability of salt pans are ignored in the proposed plans. Current environmental regulations would prevent real estate growth on much of the salt pan lands. During the 2005 floods, mangroves and salt pans in the eastern suburbs mitigated the scale of the disaster, while the destruction of mangroves and violation of FSI norms were among the key causes of flooding in the western suburbs.<sup>24</sup> Following a court directive, the state government notified close to 200 hectares of salt pan land as “protected forests” in 2009 since they overlapped with mangroves. Commonising through encroachment in this case has real environmental benefits, and there are also important lessons to be learnt for land use planning from a disaster mitigation perspective. If revenue land has been encroached on for salt panning, one of Mumbai’s worst kept secrets is that part of the land leased out to salt pans in the eastern suburbs has already been converted for real estate development. Even as the move to use salt pans for housing and infrastructure gains ground, large areas of mangroves, which also have significant ecological and environmental benefits, have been destroyed to make way for “development”.<sup>25</sup>

Directly related to the construction boom in the city, dredging for sand in river beds has become a huge ecological concern, with the judiciary intervening in many cases to halt it. Sand mining or dredging from river bed commons is a “traditional” activity for some of the denotified tribes in Maharashtra (Kaikadis, Katkaris, Pardhis),<sup>26</sup> but this has now been taken over by what the media generally refer to as the sand mafia or contractors with advanced dredging machinery and tools. Both environmental concerns and the demand for construction material have displaced these groups from the riverbed commons, forcing them to fall back on other forest commons. Basket weaving and making bamboo and leaf products are the activities they are engaged in in the city because as “ex-criminal” tribes they find it difficult to obtain other kinds of employment. These activities are linked to the commonising strategies of foraging and scavenging for resources in forests, as we shall later see.

Mangroves are biodiversity-rich wetland habitats that cover an estimated 56.4 square kilometres in Mumbai,<sup>27</sup> with an equal if not greater area lost to development and degradation over the last two decades.<sup>28</sup> In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region with ecological, resource and livelihood contiguities, the mangrove area is estimated to be around 100 sq km.<sup>29</sup> A significant proportion (1,750 acres)<sup>30</sup> is owned and managed by Godrej and Boyce and its associated trusts or foundations. The rest is either privately owned (private reserved forests), part of government reserved forests, or on unprotected revenue land. The last is the most likely to be encroached on and destroyed for “development”. Mangrove stands are breeding grounds for fish during the monsoon. Apart from being rich in several species of flora and fauna, they provide significant flood protection and land erosion control in low coastal areas, especially during high tides. Along with the few remaining mud flats and salt marshes, they constitute Mumbai’s first line of defence against sea water ingress, as in other coastal

areas around the world. Mangroves and salt pans are spaces of dissipation and prevent coastal erosion.

### Hunting, Gathering and Foraging

Mumbai is one of the few cities that has a national park within it, the Sanjay Gandhi National Park. In the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, there are four other national parks with buffer zones, Tungreshwar, Phansad, Karnala and Tansa, and together they cover close to 600 sq km of land. Coastal wetlands, rocky outcrops, reserved or protected forests, private forests (9,000 acres),<sup>31</sup> unprotected forests, and scrubland constitute 1,800 sq km or 43% of the area of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.<sup>32</sup> Unused land owned by public sector and government establishments also harbours fauna and flora in a limited way. For instance, Mumbai Port Trust, the largest landowner in the city, has a considerable area of land, which is mostly derelict but parts of it have creeks passing through them and corridors of vegetation connecting to mangroves and mudflats or marshes. Other establishments such as the airport, educational institutions (Mumbai University, Indian Institute of Technology), and Aarey Milk Colony have patches of forest, grassland or scrubland that harbour many species of plants and animals.

Mumbai has a large number of groups eking out livelihoods through hunting, gathering and foraging in these semi-wilderness areas owned largely by private or public entities. These livelihoods are permanent or seasonal sources of income for a range of native and migrant households interlinked by relations of ethnicity, class and exchange. For these groups, resource dependencies implicate themes of migration, equity, exclusion, access and marginalisation of diverse kinds. The forests, wetlands, mangroves and marshes are an important source of food, work and income for thousands of Mumbai’s original inhabitants and poor migrants. Dependents on these habitats hunt, forage and gather food, fodder, fuelwood, leaves, flowers, fruits, medicinal plants and a wide range of minor forest produce. As stated earlier, most of these sites belong to private or government entities and these activities are essentially “illegal”, which entails paying bribes to diverse gatekeepers. The process of turning private and public lands into commons, or commonising, comprises a complex web of interactions and outcomes involving livelihoods, ethnicity, class, migration, seasonality and exclusion. It yields an understanding of a very different subterranean aspect of Mumbai’s economy and social structure, in many ways leading us to reimagine the notion of the urban itself.

Adivasi hamlets in or around the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Aarey Milk Colony have shrunk with the encroachment of luxury residential complexes, hotels, golf courses and recreation spaces. But their residents continue to subsist on cattle grazing, gathering firewood and forest products, and cultivating paddy on tiny parcels of land where possible – all considered illegal as these hamlets are in reserved forests. This means that they face constant harassment and demands for bribes. Yet others, lower-caste migrants from within and outside the state, gather fuelwood for themselves and for the migrant urban poor who are either too poor or lack the ethnic and political connections to gain access to other forms of cooking fuel. These are mostly pavement dwellers and the homeless but it is also not uncommon to find more settled households in the city dependent on firewood

for cooking. Small tea shops and eateries in poorer neighbourhoods and slums also use firewood as their main fuel.<sup>33</sup> A large market for fuelwood thus exists, serviced by gatherers of firewood, mostly young women and girls. This is not just due to the gendered division of labour but also because women are seen as better placed to negotiate with gatekeepers who may show leniency because of their gender. For that very reason, they also occasionally face sexual harassment. Women also have to juggle time-use concerns, both due to distance issues and having to match the timings of “friendly” stewards. Gathering fallen wood is mostly done by women and children, while cutting down trees, a more risky operation that may involve going deep into forests or having to negotiate with guards, is done by men.

### Fodder

Foraging is also for grass, fodder for more than 2,000<sup>34</sup> *tabelas* that provide milk and milk products to the poor and to the middle classes, to *dugdhalayas* (milk centres), sweet shops, small eateries and also large hotels and restaurants. They even support small-scale chilling plants and dairies hidden away and invisible except to the most intrepid of “walkers in the city”, and to municipal and mafia extortionists. There are also larger “licensed” *tabelas* in and around Aarey Milk Colony, one of the oldest government established dairies in India. There are an estimated 30,000 head of cattle, mostly buffaloes, but estimates vary.<sup>35</sup> Assessments of their contribution to Mumbai’s milk supply range from 15% to 20%.<sup>36</sup> The substantial demand for costlier unsterilised and unpasteurised milk over state-subsidised sterilised and pasteurised milk packages is a cultural phenomenon that cannot be explained by the rational logic of the marketplace. Informal dairying is a substantial contributor to the city’s dairy needs that transforms the urban landscape and supports the informal and organised foraging sector. Historically several large *tabelas* operated in the mill area in central and south Mumbai but these were forced to move to the suburbs in the 1950s in response to the increasing demand for land by government agencies and for housing. The Bombay High Court passed an order relocating all *tabelas* to Dapchiri village in Dahanu, about 150 km away from the city, but stiff resistance to the move has so far stalled its implementation. *Tabela* owners allege that the move is propelled by builders eyeing 150 acres of prime land on which the *tabelas* are located. A cattle market located in Goregaon in the western suburbs was ordered closed in 2010 citing provisions of the Cattle Control Act, which makes the city a prohibited zone for cattle.

On a smaller scale, fodder is also supplied to bullocks. As in many other Indian cities, bullock-drawn carts are used for transporting water, cooking fuel (kerosene), and miscellaneous goods. The *tabelas* were among the worst affected during the 2005 floods with thousands of cattle perishing and no compensation since most of these were supposedly illegal. The presence of informal dairying on such a large-scale despite the supply of packaged pasteurised and sterilised milk by government and cooperative dairies raises interesting questions regarding the skills<sup>37</sup> and enterprise of rural migrants and the character of the retail economy in Mumbai.

The sources of fodder are forests and mangroves, and large corporate or public establishments with abundant land – again

involving the payment of bribes for access. To escape unwarranted attention, foraging is carried out by individuals or small groups. Sale and distribution of fodder is to individual cattle owners or through agents who have their own transport and distribution networks. The huge demand for fodder, however, has led to a situation where some of the more enterprising foragers, who may be linked by political affiliation or ethnicity to officials in public establishments (where fodder is in abundance), have become contractors for grass cutting. Often some staff members of these establishments (for example, the university or port) obtain contracts in the names of their relatives, competing with individual foragers. Realising the profitability of grass as a source of income, entities such as Mumbai International Airports, Airports Authority of India, Mumbai University, Mumbai Port Trust and Mazgaon Dockyards, and other public as well as private sector undertakings with large areas of land under their control have begun floating tenders for grass cutting and removal. The university even uses its land for growing grass as a source of revenue.

From a real estate point of view, the *tabelas* are now being eyed by builders because they are located in areas where “development” has saturated all available space and land prices are high. Hygiene and sanitation issues are being raised both by bourgeois environmentalists and fronts for the construction lobby to force the government and municipal authorities to shift *tabelas* out of the city. In areas around Aarey Milk Colony, villages such as Sai Bangoda, an adivasi hamlet,<sup>38</sup> are gradually being encircled by new luxury and leisure developments, and shrinking in space. Most of these have come up in violation of forest and environmental regulations. Like a section of salt pan operators, a significant section of *tabela* owners would like to sell off their sites if a good price can be obtained. One of these owners who narrowly lost out on getting compensation from a World Bank-sponsored road widening project, said, “*Agar dus foot aage hoti, toh meri bhi lottery lag gayi ho thi*” (if my plot was 10 feet ahead, I would have hit the jackpot).

*Tabelas* in *gaothans* – villages with “original inhabitants” that existed before the development control rules came into play – display dual propensities. The *gaothans* do function as commons in the ways in which they manage land use, but being located in the midst of new developments in the suburbs, they are also targets for illegal displacement, buying out and redevelopment. Six villages in the Powai area – Powai, Tirandaz, Paspoli, Tunga, Saki and Kopri – have been fighting a battle for more than four decades against what they term the illegal transfer of their agricultural and grazing lands to developers. For many *gaothans*, the compensatory amounts are often too high to resist, if they have not already been displaced by actual violence or threats of it.<sup>39</sup> Political mobilisation on the basis of ethnicity and regional origin creates the possibility of each aspect of everyday social practice being available and used for political action. Thus the threat of violence to the “other” – howsoever it is defined – is multiplied. The commons, both civic and ecological, then become sites of contestation and struggle. Some of the *gaothans* are inhabited by migrants from the north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan, who moved in between 50 and 100 years ago. Despite their considerable cultural integration, they are not spared from threats of eviction and displacement by contemporary ethnic

mobilisation. Quite the largest proportion of *tabelas* in the *gaothans* and other sites are owned or managed by north Indian migrants. The *gaothans* are also scenes of increasing conflict between native older inhabitants and newer migrants, especially over use of common areas for fishing, livestock and housing. Current mobilisation of *gaothan* residents, demanding the relaxation of development regulations for the benefit of “original” inhabitants, is also taking place along religious lines, with Christian residents<sup>40</sup> being much more organised and vocal than others.

Other than firewood and fodder, foraging for leaves (*teak*, jackfruit, and *palash*, used for wrapping flowers and garlands, especially in Dadar’s *phool galli*, and for making *patravalis*, or leaf plates), special leaves (*apta*, mango, neem), and fruits used on festive occasions (Ganeshotsav, Janmashtami, Durga Puja and Chhat Puja) are also major activities. Competitive political mobilisation around religious and regional identities has increased the number of public celebrations of these festivals, with an enhanced demand for floral paraphernalia. Lower middle-class citizens join in foraging during festivals to supplement their incomes, and they are often in a better position to negotiate access to such flora found in the “commons” of public establishments. An interesting aspect of all kinds of foraging is that the foragers, in the process of gathering and collecting, transporting, distributing and selling, create and “follow the cursives of an urban text”, becoming “practitioners (who) employ spaces that are not self-aware” and through “their proliferating illegitimacy” give rise to “procedures – many sided, resilient, cunning, and stubborn – that evade discipline” (de Certeau 1984: 105). They thereby evade and subvert, if only in a limited way, the power of urban planners and the process of capital accumulation to make and remake the city.

The subversive actions of hunters, gatherers and foragers in Mumbai should not, however, be confused with a radical or alternative urbanism, or a different approach to urban practices that is more equitable or sustainable. The seeds of an alternative are only visible in the discipline-evading procedures, in the commonising of public and private spaces, and the place-making that is contingent in such practices. The actions of hunters, foragers and gatherers in Mumbai may create an alternative image of a “transhuman city”, one that is juxtaposed against “the clear text of a planned, readable city” (de Certeau 1984: 103). But it would not be judicious to label the place-making involved in the creation of such a transhuman city in entirely positive or negative terms. The place-making in the long commodity chain of resource-based primary activities also engages reactionary chauvinist and ethnic competitive politics. Simultaneously, being located at the most exploitative and alienating end of the commodity chain inserts them into the larger process of surplus extraction and capital accumulation. The higher ends of the chain in many ways show the ones at the lower end “the mirror of their own future” in Marx’s words, and instil in them the speculative aspirations that define and characterise the city itself.

### Commonising Mumbai: Re-visioning the City

The commonising of the public and private opens up the concepts of ownership, access, usage, and private, public and open access to reinterpretation. Multiple kinds of resource controls (enclosed,

reserved, protected, unprotected) and resource dependencies that feed into the urban economies of consumption and accumulation implicate larger political problems that include a gendered division of labour, ethnic conflicts and identity, place-making, autonomy and resistance, and informality. Eschewing a “developmentalist” livelihoods perspective without denying the crucial livelihoods role that commonising plays for the urban poor, we suggest that “commonisation” and primitive modes of survival are not merely aspects of economic marginalisation. Rather they reflect ways in which middle-class and elite consumption, forms of urban governance, modes of capital accumulation, infrastructure growth, regional capital and population flows, and political conflicts and mobilisation facilitate or promote specific resource dependencies and their spatial outcomes for the city.

Instead of perceiving romanticised visions of an alternative in the commonising of public and private resource enclaves in the city, this process should be compared with the processes of general colonisation of resources for metropolitan growth, consumption and accumulation – a historical set of practices that encompass colonialism or imperialism and unequal exchange. With the exception of sections of fisherfolk and *adivasi* inhabitants, few of the resource-dependent groups see their economic activities as constituting an alternative to capitalism. As a matter of fact there are signs that the second generation of fishers and tribal communities are already shifting their focus towards an urbanism that even as it expropriates is seen to be more emancipatory compared to feudal structures. Resource dependencies may be born of diverse kinds of structurally determined choices, but the outcome is the insertion of hunters, gatherers and foragers into chains of surplus extraction and commodity exchange. In other words, commonising brings in natural resources hitherto used in non-commodity forms of production into the ambit of commodification. Hence, while destruction of the commons is a recurring theme in the literature on urban commons, the continued use, preservation, maintenance and regeneration of natural resource enclaves in the city is linked to an Indian bourgeois logic whose significance is not adequately grasped, and cannot be explained purely in terms of short-term capital accumulation and class struggle.

Even while there is large-scale destruction of and encroachment on salt pans, mangroves and forests, corporate and state owners of such properties, as well as legal and illegal claimants of such sites from among the urban poor prefer or opt to use, maintain and regenerate such resources not just for short-term livelihood or corporate social responsibility reasons, but also to preserve the possibility of cashing in on their land values at a future date. In short, for speculation. This is especially the case with foundations and trusts that own large parcels of derelict and forested land in Mumbai. It is also one of the reasons the state (for example, Port Trust, Ministry of Commerce, Railways) holds on to property because speculation and the sale or lease of land on a commercial basis has become the most significant source of revenue for state governments in India, and for companies in a financial crunch. So, along with tendencies towards accumulation by dispossession, there are simultaneous and contradictory propensities to hold on to parcels of land that are liable to be used as the commons by the poor. Combined with pressures

from bourgeois environmentalism, political imperatives and citizen demands, resource commons (in practice if not in terms of property regimes) continue to be maintained, created or regenerated across the city. These include “exclusivist” commons – recreational places of the rich – as well as the politicised commons, ponds, lakes, parks and gardens that are linked to the city’s ethnic and identity politics, and as such are not secular, but in practice turn out to be much more open and accessible to diverse sections of the public.

The short-term possibility of using the resources held for speculative purposes thus becomes established. But if commonising can still be practised within this speculative economic and political regime, it is a consequence of the limited democratic victories and the competitive political mobilisation that Indian democracy gives scope to. Yet, from a legal perspective on property regimes, the usability of and access to resources on public and private property becomes conceivable, even plausible, given the nature of the property that they seek to access. This is rarely land itself, but what grows on the land and what adjoins the land – water, wetlands, marshes. They are forms of resources that can take on the form of property that can be commoditised, but these are resources that constitute “certain forms of property (that) were indeterminate in character, for they were not definitely private property, but neither were they definitely common property, being a mixture of private and public right” (Marx 1996). This indeterminate character stems from that “there exist objects of property which, by their very nature, can never acquire the character of predetermined private property, objects which, by their elemental nature and their accidental mode of existence, belong to the sphere of occupation rights, and therefore of the occupation right of that class which precisely because of these occupation rights, is excluded from all other property and which has the same position in civil society as these objects have in nature” (ibid). This elemental nature of resources particularly applies to forest produce, minerals, and flora and fauna that “accidentally” come to exist, and thereby result in a “twofold private right: ... a private right of the owner and a private right of the non-owner,” the basis then for the emergence of “all customary rights of the poor” (ibid). In the contemporary urban context of Mumbai, laws made by agents of the dominant classes fail to understand and regulate “according to the legal nature of things” (ibid). Instead they prefer to regulate natural resources strictly by established law, according to which ownership of all resources that are elemental or indeterminate in character are vested in those who have a private right to property, which is determinate in character and on which other kinds of resources come to exist or are generated.<sup>41</sup>

Hence hunters, gatherers and foragers believe in the legitimacy of their practices since their conception of law is based on the legal nature of things, not on how the law defines natural objects. Commonising arises precisely out of this belief. Land speculation (both by the state and by private owners), the indeterminate nature of some elemental objects of nature, the problem of assigning a legal character to such objects, the politico-cultural role of resources, the fuzziness of embedded resources, and their shifting economic roles and exchange values give rise to an “illegal pluralism”<sup>42</sup> that defines the nature of the urban commons in Mumbai. It is an illegal pluralism that is located in large-scale

illegalities, which is at the core of urban development in Mumbai, as it is in many other cities in India. In sifting through diverse kinds of encroachments, varieties of illegalities and the historical evolution of the spatio-temporal iterations of these, one gets to imagine a different vision of Mumbai as a city, the city as a “space of uttering” in the words of de Certeau. As such, one can observe processes such as (i) “appropriation of the topographic system” by fish workers, grass-cutters, and fuelwood gatherers; (ii) “the spatial realisation” of resource sites through the activities of hunting and foraging; and (iii) the formation of “pragmatic contracts” (de Certeau 1984: 106) through the movement of resource-dependent individuals and groups for gathering, fishing, hunting, collecting, and for transportation to sites of sale and use where natural objects become commodified.<sup>43</sup>

In imagining the city thus, one can also visualise the possibility of a more sustainable and equitable city, one in which the commons exist not just for purposes of recreation, leisure and aesthetics, but have a use value even as they provide ecosystem services. A city that consists not just of a built environment, but also of semi- and not built environments that are not merely civic commons. Such a visualisation, however, would require that we understand resources and resource sites not using a physical geography lens, but from a sociological or anthropological viewpoint, from the perspective of the labour that transforms objects of nature into objects of use value. The environmental protection services provided by unique ecological niches and habitats, whether they are privately or state owned, also need to be imagined as the commons for policy and urban development strategies.

### Struggles for the Commons

The political economy of land acquisition and land accumulation that acts as a basis for the struggles around the commons must then centrally confront issues of labour, especially the right to labour. In doing so, one must in theorising monopoly rent not only take into account locally contingent factors, but also go beyond land and capital-centred theorisation. Thus, in addition to assuming accumulation by dispossession<sup>44</sup> and the “developmental drive that seeks to colonise more and more urban space for the affluent to take their urbane and cosmopolitan pleasures” (Harvey 2003) as the main factors behind the eviction of slum dwellers and the privatisation of public and common lands, one must ask in what ways these are an indication of the aggressive drive to expand the basis for extraction of monopoly rent. Due to historical reasons, the state, through direct exercise of ownership control and through default ownership and neglect, has come to own vast tracts of land in Indian cities, thus considerably cutting into the capacity for accumulation and limiting the possibilities for monopoly rent. The struggle over the commons (including commonising the private and public) are to be perceived as acts of resistance against attempts to expand the basis for extraction of monopoly rent.

In some ways the struggles can also be seen as attempts to make accumulation possible; land plays a significant role in camouflaging corporate inefficiencies, both for indigenous and foreign capital.<sup>45</sup> Land is an important part of a company’s asset portfolio that helps it tide over a crisis. The implosion of software services company Satyam Computer Services attested to this, but anyone who



follows corporate purchases and sales of land in Mumbai will be aware that all companies routinely use land as a safety net to tide over cash crunches. But land is also crucial for the vast petty commodity capital that employs the majority of the urban labour force in India. These have critical connections with those working in or on the commons, with the agricultural sector, and for them the struggle is not about accumulation but about survival in the context of stiff competition and feudal or traditional forms of management. The struggle is to attain a level where accumulation becomes possible, and it is here that a link emerges between primitive accumulation in the agrarian sector, mineral extraction and the commons and the struggles over monopoly rent. While primitive accumulation releases millions into the urban labour market, capital in India seems to have no place for them. It has not worked out how to extract a surplus from this section of the working class, and so it comes about that to exercise their right to labour, they resort to the commons and to commonisation.<sup>46</sup> Since the entitlements from their labour can only be monetised through commodification, this labour force enters commodity chains at the lowest level, subjecting itself to various form of exploitation through links with petty capital, retail capital, and also big business.

The diversity of economic activities and the complexity of commodity chains that a resource commons perspective draws attention to is useful in helping us reframe urban theory. It is imperative, as Robinson shows, if we are to “support a more inclusive and hopefully redistributive form of urban development” (2008: 74). The issues raised here hopefully also support her advocacy of “generalised agglomerations economies of a city as opposed to specialised globalising clusters” (ibid: 74) if we can creatively and innovatively conceptualise how resource commons and their dependencies can form the nucleus of an alternative developmental agenda. Such an alternative can more forcefully critique exclusivist city visioning agendas such as that of the Vision Mumbai proposal. Any alternative, however, has to take the idea of a critique of the political economy seriously by incorporating, for instance, issues of migration and the politics of

ethnic and religious conflicts and competition. Mumbai is home to a range of ethnic conflicts and the emancipatory politics of the lower castes is as constitutive of the city’s political ethos as the chauvinist and revanchist ideologies of nativist political groups. The implications of religious competition and political mobilisation along ethnic lines for the city’s public spaces and civic commons have been brought out in several studies (Parthasarathy 2009). Their links to the resource commons has been pointed out here and in other studies.

Workers in the resource commons provide (through petty capitalists) consumers access to culturally significant and locally valued goods and services (non-packaged, non-commodified dairy products, religious paraphernalia, seasonal fish and crustaceans, and so on). Because of the demand for freshness,<sup>47</sup> the short period of demand, the temporal and seasonal nature of demand, and the skills required to access and market these goods, many of these cannot be commodified. So it is difficult for capital to “co-opt, subsume, commodify and monetise such cultural differences just enough to be able to appropriate monopoly rents therefrom” (Harvey 2001: 410). The struggles over the commons outlined here perhaps parallel the expression or reflection of “alienation and resentment among the cultural producers” to commodification (ibid). Successive streams of migration and political mobilisation around ethnicity<sup>48</sup> in Mumbai have increased the demand for unique culturally defined natural resource-derived goods. Since migration and ethnic mobilisation are outcomes of strategies of capital accumulation and expropriation of the peasantry and the working class, ethnic conflicts involving migrants are also to be seen as fundamentally to do with the right to labour. A focus on the resource commons in Mumbai compels us to turn our gaze away temporarily and for strategic reasons from the global city paradigm – an imaginary that seems to be shared by radical scholars and neoliberal re-visionaries of the city – and look instead at “new kinds of urban imaginaries” (Robinson 2002: 550) that emerge and enable scholars and activists to develop more integrated approaches to social, political and environmental struggles.

## NOTES

- 1 The appropriation of a city by using different names or pronunciations reflects not just cultural or regional differences, but also diverse claims to the city. In recent years, the predominantly Christian residents of the *gaothans*, the city’s “original” villages, have used the word “Mobai” for the city.
- 2 SoBo is a tabloid term used to refer to south Bombay.
- 3 See Nijman (2006).
- 4 Discussed in Singh and Parthasarathy (2010); see also Parthasarathy (2003a).
- 5 For instance, the Vision Mumbai plan of Bombay First 2003.
- 6 For a detailed discussion, see Parthasarathy (2009).
- 7 Patel (1999) mentions this in reviewing Parthasarathy (1997).
- 8 Mumbai is here used variously to refer to the city limits of the Greater Mumbai Municipal Corporation, the Mumbai Urban Agglomeration as used by the Census of India, and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region as it has been administratively defined by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority. So it includes a number of cities, towns

and villages outside the island city and outside the limits of the Greater Mumbai Municipal Corporation. It has been made clear where the name of the city refers to larger areas outside the municipal limits.

- 9 The larger issue of expropriation of rural livelihoods to meet the needs of city-based capital and urban consumption needs is not discussed in this paper. The shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in urban governance in discussed in Harvey (1989).
- 10 I thank Hemantkumar Chouhan for assistance in procuring the quantitative data on fisheries in Mumbai.
- 11 Activists, cooperative societies and researchers allege that the fisheries census grossly underestimate the number of households dependant on fishing as a source of livelihood.
- 12 Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute 2006. The number doubles if one considers the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.
- 13 The latter have become seasonal, but have the potential to flood many parts of the city.
- 14 For a brief discussion of the impact of the entry of north Indian migrants into fishing activities, see Ranade (2008).
- 15 Warhaft (2001: 215) shows that the “Kolis ... are implicated in a globalised seafood export economy

which aims primarily to augment foreign exchange earnings by satisfying the western world’s love affair with prawns.”

- 16 The term “ordinary cities” to establish a new framework for understanding issues of urban development was introduced and popularised by Jennifer Robinson (2006).
- 17 An overview of the major issues in the struggle against the Bandra-Worli Sealink is provided in the judgment on a case filed by the Secretary of the National Fishworkers Forum, Rambhau Patil; see *Rambhau Patil vs Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation*, WP 348.2000, 9 October 2000.
- 18 Ministry of Environment and Forests, Coastal Regulation Zone Notification, 2011.
- 19 The term was introduced, conceptualised and popularised by Amita Baviskar (2002).
- 20 Koli is an umbrella term to refer to a number of castes and tribal groups in coastal Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa, and who profess different religious faiths. A majority of the Koli fisher people in Mumbai are either Son-Kolis or Mahadev Kolis.
- 21 *Accommodation Times*, 11 August 2009, and Maneckshaw (2010); the figures were also cited in a statement made by the then minister for commerce and industry in Parliament on 14 March 2006.

- 22 Slum rehabilitation and public housing are constantly used as justification by government officials, political leaders and builders to reframe urban development regulations. This partly pits the poor against one another, and also reflects the commercialisation of slum rehabilitation schemes, which provide an entry to hitherto unavailable sites for "development". This has the cumulative effect of opening up real estate for "development" and makes more land available for the extraction of monopoly rent.
- 23 Similar accusations have been made in the case of the planned Navi Mumbai International Airport project.
- 24 For an overview of the 2005 Mumbai floods and an assessment of the vulnerability of the city's population, see Parthasarathy (2009).
- 25 The term "development" is widely used by urban planners and builders as an abbreviation for real estate development. In other words, for developing a built environment.
- 26 A section of the Kolis, the Mangelas, are also involved in this.
- 27 Vijay et al (2005) provide an overview of the mangrove habitat in Mumbai using remotely sensed data.
- 28 Reported in the State of Environment Report: Maharashtra, 2006, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research.
- 29 Reported in the State of Environment Report: Maharashtra, 2006, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research.
- 30 The Soonabai Pirojsha Godrej Marine Ecology Centre manages these mangroves on land owned by Godrej and Boyce.
- 31 In a judgment delivered in March 2008, the Bombay High Court held that 9,193 acres constituted private forests in Mumbai. This was in response to a public interest litigation on housing development in private forests.
- 32 Calculated from data in the Regional Plan for Mumbai Metropolitan Region, 1996-2011, Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority.
- 33 These are also patronised by middle-class office goers, students and residents.
- 34 No official data is available on tabelas and the cattle population. The figures cited here are approximate, and they have been cited by the Mumbai Milk Producers Association in their battles against the state's move to shift all cattle and milk-related activities out of the city.
- 35 The Mumbai Milk Producers Association gives the figure of 28,000, while the Janhit Manch, which is fighting a case against the move to shift the tabelas out of the city, had the rather exaggerated figure of 1,51,000 in its writ petition. Newspaper reports on the high court judgment of 2008 put it at 50,000 head of cattle.
- 36 Informal calculations by representatives of the Mumbai Milk Producers Association.
- 37 One of the tabela owners who was offered compensation to shift outside the city said that he did not have the skills to take up any other job in the city; "this is the only thing that I know".
- 38 The village commons, nearby forests, and Aarey Milk Colony itself have been considerably affected by the controversial luxury Royal Palms project consisting of high-end commercial and residential properties, and hospitality and recreation facilities.
- 39 This is despite restrictions on the floor space index in the gaothans.
- 40 Most of them are from Koli fishing castes, who are much more cosmopolitan and syncretic in their religious practices and beliefs; see Ranade (2008) for a discussion.
- 41 For an application of Marx's views on legal rights to common pool resources in the Indian context, see Parthasarathy (2003b).
- 42 I thank K P Soma for suggesting this term to me.
- 43 Classical ideas of central place and ecological processes, human ecology models and older theories of gentrification, all of which are still the staple of urban planners in India, are all overturned in this understanding of the city. Mobility, place-making, spatial practices and relations need to be rethought and re-imagined.
- 44 Harvey (2003) and Banerjee-Guha (2010) provide a general theoretical discussion on accumulation by dispossession. Banerjee-Guha has several Indian case studies using the accumulation by dispossession framework.
- 45 For an elaboration on this theme using the state capitalism lens, see Parthasarathy (2011).
- 46 Sustained research by Sharit Bhowmik, among others, has generated significant insights on the use of urban public space and the civic commons by the urban poor (street hawkers and vendors) in Mumbai; see, for instance, Bhowmik (2010).
- 47 The idea of freshness is partly embedded in caste notions of purity and pollution.
- 48 For an excellent overview of ethnicity and identity politics, see Patel (2003).

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